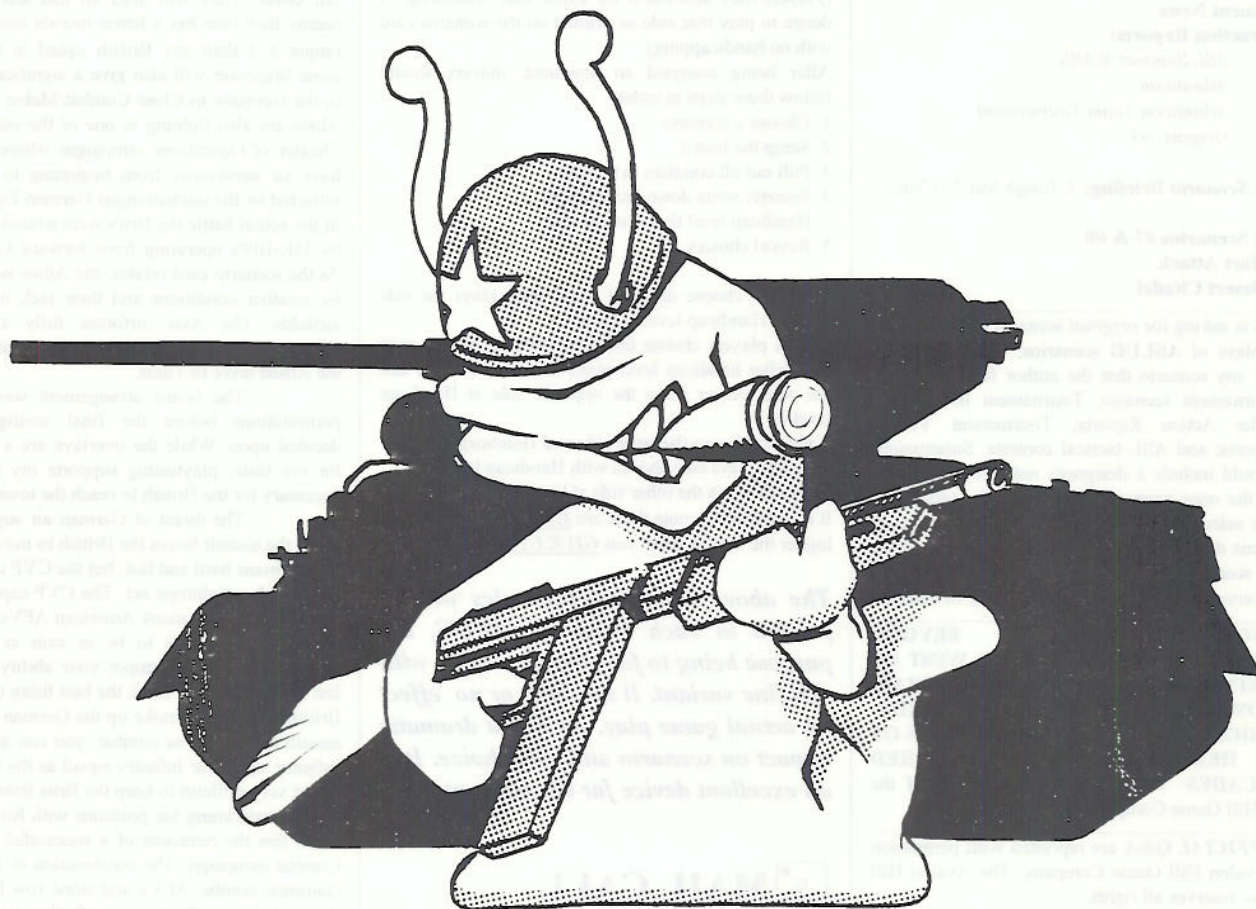


A.S.L.U.G.

ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER UNION of GAMERS

ISSUE FOUR JULY, 1993

THE SOURCE FOR ASL NEWS



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ASLUG is asking for original scenario designs; series replays of ASLUG scenarios; Tactical Guides for any scenario that the author feels is a good tournament scenario; Tournament listings and After Action Reports; Tournament Victory reports; and ASL tactical contests. Submissions should include a designer's notes article similar to the ones printed in this issue. Scenarios that are selected for printing will include designer's name displayed on the scenario itself. Designers of scenarios that are selected for printing will receive one free issue of the ASLUG newsletter.

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Tournament Coverage

Tournament Directors are encouraged to send in any information on their tournaments as soon as possible. Early release of information usually yields greater attendance.

AUSTRALIAN SCENARIO HANDICAPPING

All ASLUG scenarios will have the Australian scenario handicapping system as a standard feature. Any scenario submitted to ASLUG should have these handicaps included. Several ASLers are presently working on devising handicaps for official Avalon Hill scenarios, which will see print in FFE. These efforts should give some neglected scenarios a second life.

The purpose of this article is to explain the workings of the handicapping system.

Each scenario will have six levels of handicap bidding.

Axis 1-3 and Allied 1-3

(Players may also bid 0 for either side, indicating a desire to play that side as printed on the scenario card with no handicapping)

After being assigned an opponent, players should follow these steps in order.

1. Choose a scenario.
2. Setup the board.
3. Pull out all counters in the OB.
4. Secretly write down the side and Handicap level they wish to play.
5. Reveal choices.

If players choose different sides, each plays the side and the Handicap level chosen.

If both players choose the same side, the player with the higher handicap level plays the side he chose and the other player plays the opposite side at Handicap level 0.

If players choose the same side and Handicap level.

Low DR plays side chosen with Handicap level bid;

High DR plays the other side at level 0.

It is important to note these are HANDICAPS, the higher the bid the more you GIVE UP.

The above Handicapping rules will be printed in each issue of ASLUG, the purpose being to familiarize players with this fine variant. It has little or no effect on actual game play, yet has a dramatic impact on scenario and side choice. It is an excellent device for tournament play.

MAIL CALL

(Letters to the Editor)

(Still no letters!!!)

"AYO GURKHALI!!!"

(Here come the Gurkhas)

"Kaphar hunnu bhanda marnu ramro"

(It is better to die than to live a coward)

-Gurkha motto



Designers Notes:

ASLUG7 - Hart Attack

Gary Fortenberry

Hart Attack was a fun scenario to work up. The action takes place in a somewhat ignored, at least by ASL, theater. Operation Torch and the drive to Tunis is one of my favorite areas of WWII to read about. The American army is "Seeing the Elephant" and the Brits are finally gaining an ally which will fight by their side and even speak the same language (sort of). How could I resist?

In this scenario the Brits have a very powerful attacking force and excellent support, and the terrain over which they must approach the town offers fair cover. They will need all this and more as the enemy they face has a better morale and firepower at ranges ≤ 4 than any British squad in the OB. This same firepower will also give a significant advantage to the Germans in Close Combat/Melee. The Western Allies are also fighting in one of the only European Theater of Operations campaigns where they did not have air superiority from beginning to end. This is reflected by the unchallenged German Fighter support. In the actual battle the Brit's were strafed several times by ME-109's operating from forward German bases. As the scenario card relates, the Allies were hampered by weather conditions and their lack of all weather airfields. The Axis airforces fully exploited this advantage and continued harassing raids throughout the Allied drive to Tunis.

The board arrangement went through 3 permutations before the final configuration was decided upon. While the overlays are a bit excessive for my taste, playtesting supports my that they are necessary for the British to reach the town.

The threat of German air support slowing down the assault forces the British to move fast and hit the Germans hard and fast, but the CVP cap makes the Brit attack a tightrope act. The CVP cap is important, but if you lose too many American AFVs you will find your infantry efforts to be in vain as the German reinforcements will hamper your ability to reach the last few buildings. I think the best thing to do with the British OBA is to Smoke up the German positions and assault them in close combat, you can afford to trade Infantry squad for Infantry squad as the Germans will find it very difficult to keep the Brits from surrounding and overwhelming his positions with his at start units much less the remnants of a successful British Close Combat campaign. The combination of OBA Smoke, Gammon bombs, AFV's and stone row houses makes the probability of success with this style of assault better than average. The U.S. M3s are very useful in an assault of this type, their ability to fire two Guns from each vehicle is of great help to the Brits, especially when the "88" is found and neutralized or bypassed. While the M3's are very dangerous to the German defenders, the German AFV's can prove a game winner if used craftily. I generally set up all possible British Infantry as riders and try to drive into the German rear or at least the flank. If a German defender does not realize the possible threat and adequately cover his flanks and even rear with some firepower he will most likely find himself fighting from encircled positions with no rout paths and little room for maneuver. The British will most likely find themselves in good positions by turn 4 or 5, weathering out the air assault and a possible armor attack. If the Brits don't get hurt too much by the ME-109's (and they shouldn't if the Brits don't get impatient or foolish) they should be in good position to root out the, by now regrouped, remaining German Defenders.

All this talk of how the British should be in a good position to do this or that should not discourage German player of this scenario. The German squads have an "8" morale, good leaders and SWs, air support, tank reinforcements and let's not forget the infamous "88". If the Germans spend some time studying the setup possibilities he will find several good options open to him. I think as the German you must decide where you will fallback to (you will be falling back!) and where your "88" will be situated as this monster will not be moving anywhere. You must not get too cocky and try to stand up to the Attacker in a firefight. Use Assault move and Advance to keep concealment. The Brits will find their jobs much more difficult if they are continually shooting at concealed infantry hiding in stone buildings. Most of these buildings are also rowhouses and once they reach them the Brits will find it hard to form multi-hex firegroups to really hammer you.

Despite your best efforts you will most probably find yourself in dire straits around turn four or five. The arrival of your Air Support should give your infantry a much needed breather and if you recover quickly enough your armor support may allow you to mount a local counter-attack. The ability of these Germans to take back a small area should not be overlooked. Their high morale and good leadership make them a threat in a limited assault.

I have tried defending with the Germans from several areas and some have been more successful than others (I'll let you discover them for yourself), but all of my experiences with this scenario have been fun. I would rate this one as my favorite scenario of all time, at least until I find one I like better.

THE GEOMETRY OF ASL

David Hailey

I continue to encounter players at tournaments who are unaware of some simple techniques that can help determine lines of sight. I will explain two different concepts that are related to the geometric properties of our old friend the hexagon. I should also note that these calculations rely on accurate hex centers.

The first is very simple. If you locate the midpoint of between two hex centers you will find either the midpoint of a hexside or another hex center. If it is a hex center, the process can easily be continued. By breaking an LOS into shorter and shorter segments, it becomes easier to eye ball, and fewer shots are wasted knocking leaves off trees. To follow the examples you'll need board #17. Consider 17Q1 to be on the north edge.

EX. 1: LOS from 17CC9 to 17Y6

The midpoint of the hexside between AA7 and AA8 lies on the LOS. The LOS should look clearer now, and if you string it, it is.

EX. 2: LOS from 17W4 to 17E7

For longer LOS it may be more difficult to quickly locate the midpoint. One method that might help is to count out the range along hexgrains. From W4 to K10 is 12 hexes SW, and from K10 to E7 is 6 hexes NW. The midpoint will be 6 hexes SW and 3 hexes NW from W4, the hex center of N5. Now because we found a hex center, we could continue to find additional points on the LOS (hexside midpoints of R4-S5 and I6-J6). An even better idea would be to recognize the pattern of 2 hexes SW, then 1 hex NW. This would show the LOS to pass through hex centers

at T4, Q5, N5, K6, and I16. All of which could then be used to locate other midpoints. The ratio of 2:1 hexes can be obtained by reducing the ratio of hexes found when calculating the range.

Granted that not all LOS reduce nicely, and the center dots may not always be at the hex center, but I think you'll find it pays to consider this approach to LOS (if you don't already).

The advanced lesson is valuable when trying to determine if the vertex of an inherent terrain hex is going to interfere with LOS. First we must learn two terms related to a hexagon. A radius of a hexagon is the distance from the center to a vertex. Another important characteristic of a hexagon is that the length of a side is equal to its radius. A span of a hexagon is the distance from one side of the hexagon to the opposite side. I will show by example how similar triangles can be used to verify a LOS will cross a specific vertex.

For the advanced lesson examples use the RB map, chosen for its large hexes, accurate center dots, and plentiful inherent terrain.

EX. 3: LOS from CC44 to DD39

String this LOS and you will see that it appears to catch the vertex of the rubble in DD42, and we can show using similar right triangles that it does. From CC44 hex center to DD39 hex center form a right triangle with one leg 1/2 radii east and one leg 4 1/2 spans north. Then from CC44 hex center to the vertex of DD42 in question create another right triangle with one leg 1/2 radii east and one leg 1/2 spans north. Since these triangle's legs have the same ratio (1:3) they are similar, and this means the vertex lies on the LOS blocking LOS.

EX. 4: LOS from AA41 to HH39

This LOS is blocked by rubble in CC40 (3 radii and 6 spans compared to 1 radius and 2 spans).

Although there are other types, I think it is best to be familiar with characteristics of the range 5 type (EX. 3) and the range 7 type (EX. 4). These are the most common ranges at which a vertex might be crossed. Another valuable point is that there will always be two vertices crossed. The following example illustrates this nicely.

EX. 5: LOS from AA44 to FF42

The LOS looks clear, but it clips both rubble hexes (CC44 and DD42).

I hope these tips will be put to good use. These lessons have served me well. Many times opponents have been left shaking their heads in disbelief, with mangled bodies laying in open ground, and asking "How did you know that LOS was clear?"

"Simple Geometry.", I say.

"I'll show you after the game."

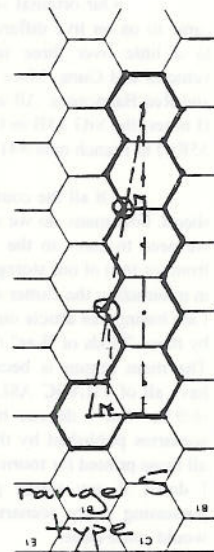


Fig 1.

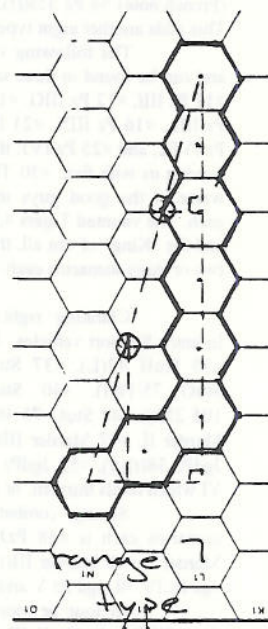


Fig 2.

MOTOR POOL

Richard Hill

Our original set of German 5 8" counters came to us on five different countersheets amounting to a little over three full sheets of German blue vehicles and Guns. More have arrived in Paratrooper and Red Barricades. All are referred to in our Chapter II notes (the SiG 33B in German note #33, and the Pz 35R(f) in French note #4).

Of all the counters, on all of these counter sheets, how many do we actually use? Which ones do we need to carry to the tournaments or keep to the front (or top) of our storage shelf? This article is a start in minimizing the clutter and weight of this 80# game. I am basing this article on all ASL scenarios published by those "Gods of War" (our wars anyway) THAGC. The main reason is because I, as do most readers, have all of THAGC ASL scenarios published to date (6/93), but I do not have copies of all the ASL scenarios published by the various hobby 'zines, nor all those printed for tournament play yet not published. I doubt if any single person would lay claim to possessing every scenario published, though a few would come close.

Using Chapter H order I first come to our German Panzers. There are 32 of them listed, not counting that captured French Pz 35R(f) from Paratrooper.

Those seeing no action on our ASI battlefields are: #4 Pz II(f), #5 Pz III, #6 Pz 35t, #8 Pz 38t(E), #9 Aufklaerer 38(t), #10 Pz IIID, #18 Pz IVA, #28 Pz M15/42(i), and #29 Pz P26/40(i); a total of nine.

Those included in one or two scenarios are: #1 Pz IB, #2 Pz IIA, #7 Pz 38(t)A, #17 Pz III(f), (French note) #4 Pz 35R(f), #19 Pz IVC, #26 Pz VD. This adds another eight types to our tally.

The following vehicles are more common and can be found in three to five scenarios; #3 Pz IIf, #11 Pz IIIf, #12 Pz IIIG, #13 Pz IIIf, #14 Pz IIIf, #15 Pz IIIf, #16 Pz IIIf, #21 Pz IVE, #22 Pz IVF1, #23 Pz IVF2, and #25 Pz IVJ; this makes another eleven, leaving us with five, #30 The Pz IVH and PZ V's lay waste to the good guys in more than ten scenarios each. The vaunted Tigers #30 Pz VIE, #31 Pz VIE(L), and the "King" of 'em all, the Pz VIB see action in but two or three scenarios each.

Clanking right along we come to the Infantry Support vehicles. Those still in mothballs are: #35 StuH 42(L), #37 Stu Pz IV(Brummbar), #39 StuG 75/18(t), #40 StuG 75/34(t), #41 StuG 105 25(t), #42 StuG 75 46(t), #44 PzJg 35R(f), #46 Marder II, #47 Marder III(t)H, #49 PzJg III/IV, #51 JgdPz 38(t)H, #52 JgdPz IV(L), and the #56 JgdPz VI which totals thirteen, or half of this group of AFVs.

Seeing combat in from one to three scenarios each is #38 PzJg Tiger, #43 PzJg I, #45 Marder I, #48 Marder III(t)M, #50 Jgd Pz 38(t), #54 Jgd Pz IV 70, Jgd Pz V and #37 Stu IG 33B.

In four or more scenarios each are: #33 StuG III B, #34 StuG III G, #35 StuG IIIG(L), #36 StuH 42, #52 JgdPz IV. Of this group the StuG IIIG sees the most action.

Of the SPW 250 251 series of Halftracks, thirteen are represented in counter form, six of which see no action; #58 The SPW 250 sMG, #59 SPW 250 7, #60 SPW 250 8, #61 SPW 250 9, #62 SPW 250 10, and #67 SPW 251 22.

In one to five scenarios each are: #57 SPW 250 1, #58 SPW 251 sMG, #59 SPW 251 2, #64 SPW 251 9, and #66 SPW 251 16.

#62 SPW 251 10 is seen more than eight times, and #63 SPW 251 1 at least twenty.

The next section is our Recon vehicles, of which there are twelve represented in counter form.

#68 Kfz 13, #71 PSW231 (6 rad), #72 PSW 231 (8rad), #74 PSW 234-1, #76 PSW 234/3, and #77 PSW234-4 have been idle.

Appearing in one to five scenarios are the other half of the recon element: #68 PSW 221, #70 PSW222(L), #72 PSW232 (8rad), #73 PSW233, and #75 PSW 234-2.

Rolling right along, we come to the Self-propelled artillery. There are sixteen vehicles housed here, from a twin AA mount to a 150mm monster.

Nine of these vehicles have never been started, they are: #79 sIG II, #80 sIG 38(t)M, #81 PzA II, #82 PzA LrS(f), #84 flakPz 38(t), #85 37 flakPz IV, #87 flakPzIV/37, #91 Kfz 4, #92 2cm flak LKW.

Seen in only a few scenarios are the rest: #78 sIG IB, #83 PzA III/IV, #86 flakPz IV/20, #88 SdKfz 10.4, #90 SdKfz 7/1, and #92 the 37cm flak LKW.

That neat self-propelled Demo, #93 the Goliath, is seen in only one scenario.

Last of the vehicles are the Transport and Tractors.

The two neatest ones, #95 the Kfz1/20 Schwimmwagen, and #97 that really cool half-tracked motorcycle; the Kettenkrad or SdKfz 2, which was designed to pull around Recoiless Rifles for the paratroopers assaulting Crete, see absolutely no combat in ASI, yet.

#94 The Kfz 1, #96 Opel 6700 and Bussing NAG 4500, #98 SdKfz 7, #99 SdKfz 11 have all done thier duties, from three times for the gun pulling SdKfz 11 to almost twenty scenarios for the Opel Blitz.

Next comes the Ordnance section. Where Mortars are in the lead. Only three take 5/8" counter form. #2 the 8cm GPW 34 pounds out Smoke and death in more than a dozen scenarios, #3 the 10cm NbW 35, and #4 the 12cm GrW 42 see no action. (Check out that s10 on the back of the 105mm Mortar. How about a couple of these babies to support an attack of SS troops?)

There are ten different Anti-Tank guns in the German counter mix, ranging from a diminutive killer at 37mm to an awesome monster at 128mm.

#11 The 7.62cm PaK 36r, and #14 the 12.8cm K 81/1 have yet to fire a shot on out battlefields.

#5 The 2.8cm sPzB 41, #6 3.7cm Pak 35 36, #7 4.2 cm 1e Pak 41, #8 5cm Pak 38, #9 7.5 cm Pak 97 38, #10 7.5cm Pak 40, #12 8.8cm Pak 43, #13 8.8cm Pak 43/41 all deal deth to the enemy in at least one scenario. The master blaster being the 7.5cm Pak 40 shooting it out in more than a dozen battles.

IGs come in only two sizes, #15 7.5cm 1e IG 18, and 15cm sIG 33. Both see no play.

Recoiless Guns, #17 7.5cm LG 40, and 10.5cm LG 42 have yet to apper in any scenario.

Last in our Chapter II notes come the six piece section of AA Guns. Most of which we have, in an earlier section, seen mounted on vehicles. Of these only #29 the 3.7cm flak 43 occupies no board location.

The rest: #25 2cm flak 30, #26 2cm flak 38, #27 2cm flakviering 38, #29 3.7cm flak 43, #30 8.8cm flak 18 o. 36 see action anywhere f. one to half a dozen times.

Reading through the Vehicle Notes will do a lot towards explaining why so many AFV or Gun types make no scenario appearances. Those with production figures of 100 or less would be very hard to track down to thier field of battle. Some would be lost in transportation by rail, sabotage or air attack could take out a train carrying the entire lot, moving to some assembly area would also eliminate many. Consider that once in the line, the first vehicles to break down or be knocked out would most probably be scrounged for parts for the remainder, especially captured French or Polish AFVs.

The above means that we owe a lot of thanks to those scenario designers who read through hundreds of Jove, Bantam, or Ballantine books to find a place and time for us to be able to use that comparatively rare AFV in a scenario. (Not counting the playtesting involved.) (Or, maybe they just plunk that AFV into a scenario if it fits the "time and place" and leave us to disprove it.)

I do know that many AFVs/Guns that I have shown as not being in THAGCo scenarios have seen print in scenarios published by ASLUG, Rout Report, FFE, ATP, ASL News, etc., please remember that even if that scenario has lots of our missing counters, they still won't see play unless there is a semblance of balance to it. A 60/40 split would find people playing it, if it is fun.

Any errors and opinions are mine alone, as I did the counting with a pencil check.

See you all at ASLok.

Richard Hill



AFV's, etc. BY THE NUMBER

Gary Fortenberry

On Fish's suggestion I began counting up the actual number of AFV's/SW needed to play any of THAGC's ASL scenarios. This proved to be a worthwhile task, as I have greatly reduced the portage point cost of my Avaloncon ASL kit. I mention Avaloncon specifically because it is the major tournament in which THAGC scenarios are the only scenarios played.

I went even further and counted up the total number of each MMC/SMC appearing in all THAGC scenarios. While the number SW's appearing in a scenario can increase due to scrounging/removal their multiplication is minor when compared to the results of Battle-Hardening, ELR replacement, CR, Deploying, Hero/Leader creation, etc. so I decided to just do the AFV's, Guns and SW. Without further ado, I present AFV's etc. by the number.

GERMAN

VEHICLE	#APPEARING
Pz IB	2
Pz IIA	2
Pz IIF	4
Pz 38(t)A	5
Pz IIIF	5
Pz IIIG	4
Pz IIHH	6
Pz IIJJ	4
Pz IIIL	6
Pz IIIN	3
Pz IIIfd	3
Pz IVC	1
Pz IVD	2
Pz IVE	4
Pz IVF1	2
Pz IVF2	6
Pz IVH	6
Pz IVJ	6
Pz35R(f)	4
Pz VD	2
Pz VG	6
Pz VIE	2
Pz VIE(L)	4
Pz VIB	2
StuG IIIB	6
StuG IIIG	4
StuG IIIG(L)	2
StuG 33B	4
StUH 42	3
PzJg Tiger	4
PzJG I	2
Marder I	1
Marder II(r)H	1
PzJg IIIV	1
JgdPz 38(t)	2
JgPz IV	2
JgPz IV/70	2
JgPz V	2
SPW 250/1	1
SPW 251/1	9
SPW 251/SMG	1
SPW 251/2	1
SPW 251/9	1
SPW 251/10	1
SPW 251/16	2
PSW 221	3
PSW 222	4
PSW 222(L)	1
PSW 231 (8rad)	6
PSW 234/2	1
slG 1B	3
FlaK Pz IV/20	1
SdKfz 10/4	2
SdKfz 6/2	1
SdKfz 7/1	1
Goliath	1
Kfz I	4
Opel o700 (Blitz)	6
Bussing NAG 4500	6
SdKfz 7	4
SdKfz 11	3

OTHER

Gliders	21
Wagons	6

GUNS

Mortar	
50mm Mtr	4
81mm Mtr	3

Anti-Tank	
28LL	1
37L	4
40LL	2
50L	3
75	1
75L	2
88LL(PaK 43)	1
88LL(PaK 43/41)	2

Infantry	
75	1
150	1

Artillery	
75	5
105	2

Anti-Aircraft	
20L (38)	3
20L Flak38	2
37L (43)	2
88L	2

SUPPORT WEAPONS

LMG	15
MMG	6
HMG	4
ATR	6
DC	13
FT	7
PSK	6
Phone	2
Radio	2

Scenario Briefing: A Tough Nut To Crack

Guy Chaney

Gary originally asked Mike McGrath and myself to do a Series Replay for A Tough Nut to Crack (TNC). We were unable to complete the SR due to time constraints, but we did play the scenario. I would like to relate my thoughts on TNC, and relate to the readers an overview of our playing of the scenario.

Let me start by saying that I like the scenario very much. It is fun to play, and I consider it to be balanced. I will play either side with no trepidation. I mention this as there has been talk among some players that TNC favors the British. I disagree, but I will say that the Japanese player must play a smart game, taking advantage of all of his tricks and unique capabilities to obtain victory. A poor Japanese set up or an overly cautious defending player could easily spell doom for the Emperor's charges. The Japanese player must know when to pick his spots for counterattacks or tank killing ambushes. The Japanese player in TNC must use his troops to their fullest, including their set up bonuses (HIP, hidden fortifications, bunkers, etc.). This scenario is rated as difficult for that reason. The defender must be a seasoned player who is able to take advantage of the Japanese capabilities in order to carry the fight to those cocky British.

Japanese Defense :

The Japanese player must keep the Victory Conditions in mind while contriving his set up. The British player must travel quite a ways to exit his squads, and against some very determined resistance at that. Realizing this fact, the Brits will probably try to capture some buildings and also some pillboxes in order to reduce the number of squads they will have to exit. The Japanese player should not make the British task easier by placing his pillboxes in forward or unsupported positions where they will be overrun and taken out with relative ease. Establish a strong defensive position around the victory point buildings. Connect your pillboxes with the buildings using the trenches. A very formidable ring of interlocked +3 defensive positions can be established here. The tough Japanese defenders can wait in this fortress for the British assault to throw itself upon your weapons. The Japanese player will also want to establish a strong line on board 37 to prevent an easy British exit in this area. Board 37 can probably be defended by a lighter force than board 35, at least initially. The terrain is such that many of your defenders should have ample time to react to any strong British move to exit board 37 en masse. By setting up the bulk of your forces far back from the British starting line, you preserve your force, deny the British easy victory points for taking out outlying pillboxes, and force the British to deal with formidable opposition to garner those building victory points. A few of your defenders, along with some dummies, can man forward positions to slow the British advance. HIP units are especially useful in this role as their hidden status protects them from being mass assaulted. Remember that stealthy defenders in kunai, jungle, or bamboo are not revealed solely by enemy movement through their location. This fact and the +2 drm for searching vs. Japanese defenders in this terrain, can enable HIP units to wait patiently to spring their traps. After the British assault has passed the HIP forward defenders, the Japanese player can bring these units out into the British rear. This will greatly hinder British rout paths, enable encircling fire on some British stacks, and threaten to reclaim any huts the British may have taken on their way forward.

The Japanese can rely on the pillboxes, the stone buildings, and the cluttered terrain to shield them from the British fire attacks. Their trenches will enable safe movement between defensive positions. A reminder here that a unit moving through a trench does not lose concealment due to the enemy observing his move and is also not subject to the FFNAM DRM for First Fire attacks while moving IN the trench. These can be important points in this scenario. The biggest worry for the Japanese are those six Stuart tanks. If not for the Stuarts, the Japanese would have no trouble dominating the scenario. The British infantry alone would have no chance of obtaining the victory conditions. The Japanese do not have many options available to deal with the Stuarts. They will have to be patient and wait for their chance to nail these armored monsters. The Stuarts are going to cause the Japanese some grief, but you just may be able to take a couple of them out due to the nature of the British attack. The British will have to use the Stuarts to break your line at some point, maybe repeatedly, during the scenario. Your defenders, and their cover, are just too tough for an infantry assault to push them out alone. When the Stuarts close to point blank range to deal with your squads, make your moves to try for a kill. Your options include Reaction fire (no PAATCs are required for the Japanese), ATR rear and deliberate immobilization shots, DC and tank hunter heroes, and infantry CC assaults after some preliminary SMOKE from the Japanese light mortars.

You will certainly want to take your shots as they present themselves. Do not send any units on suicide runs, but be aware that you can definitely take out these tanks under the right circumstances. The terrain may aid your cause by bogging a Stuart or two at critical moments. This is especially possible for any Stuarts overrunning your trench complexes. Eliminating the Stuarts gains the Japanese victory points while also significantly reducing the British hitting power.

British Attack:

This British force is very powerful and well equipped. As the British player you have a large number of squads (many of which are elite), excellent leadership, good machine-gun firepower, OBA support, and six Stuart tanks unopposed by enemy armor or Anti-Tank guns. The PTO terrain also gives your troops cover as they move forward to close with the enemy. It is good that you have all this help, as your troops have a long way to travel and some tough Victory Conditions to fulfill. It is unrealistic to expect to exit 12 squads against a competent Japanese defender. Therefore your British are going to have to take some buildings and pillboxes to make up the difference. Ten turns is a long time for a scenario, but in this case the British player may still find himself pressed for time. The attack must be kept moving along at a swift pace, especially at the beginning of the scenario. It is going to take time to kick the Japanese out of the stone buildings and pillboxes. Hustle your army forward to get into attack position. Don't let the forward Japanese defenders slow you up too much. The British have enough squads, tanks, and Smoke that they should be able to blow by any isolated pockets of Japanese. Overwhelm any light forward resistance and take their pillboxes from them if they were generous enough to place them so far forward. Just be sure to be careful when moving your leader assisted stacks. There are HIP Japs out there waiting to bag your 9-2. Satisfy yourself that your intended movement routes are safe before moving those big stacks. Move units through the Orchard hexes to check for Japanese and search some of the bamboo and kunai if you like. Use the Stuarts for armored assault and their smoke dispensers for cover. Your squads also have a smoke grenade ability if you need it. The 80mm OBA and the light mortars can lay down quite an extensive Smoke screen given the light breeze in the scenario. The OBA may be best suited for Smoke missions given the impressive TEM the Japanese defenders enjoy versus HE OBA attacks.

The Stuarts are the key to your attack. To be effective they will have to be used in an aggressive manner. They are not the best gun platforms, but being AFVs they can ruin the Japanese infantry's day by attempting to run over their positions. Use the Stuarts to move into the enemy's hex thereby preventing that unit from firing on your advancing infantry. Motion status can be used to reduce the chance that CC or Reaction fire will dispatch the tank. If moving into the enemy's hex seems too dangerous (they may have a -1 leader, ATRs, or DCs with them), stop at one or two hex range and blast them for a few fire phases. This is often the best approach. I like to be as aggressive with my armor as anyone, but in this scenario about the only way the Japanese can take out your Stuarts is through CC of some sort. You may not want to oblige them by driving into their hex. Your own MG and 37mm shots may just knock the position out. Especially if multiple Stuarts are firing on the same hex. If the Japanese are shrugging off everything you throw at them, the Stuarts may well have to go ahead and run in on them. This will force the issue and either knock out the position or lose you a Stuart.

Keep an eye on your timetable when making these sorts of decisions. Don't rush things, but don't let a machine-gun nest stop you cold for two or three turns either. The Stuarts' 37mm guns are fairly effective against the pillboxes as they do not pay the pillbox defense DRM on the To Hit roll when firing their AP ammo. Critical hits, resolved as a 4 even attack, may start to pour in rapidly. If your Stuarts can get behind the Japanese, they should be able to start encircling the enemy's positions (at least those not in pillboxes). Remember that being encircled does not lower a Japanese unit's morale level, but it will adversely affect their fire and movement. Try not to leave the Stuarts hanging out too far though or the Japanese may rush them to take them out with CC. A good combined arms attack, with the tanks roughing up the really stubborn pockets of resistance, is what is needed.

Well, that is a brief summary on A Tough Nut to Crack. I will now try to relate what happened in our game as best as I can remember.

Mike played the Japanese and I had the British. His set up looked very heavily stacked around the board 35 buildings. Only a few defenders were arrayed in the forward area, mostly around the board 35 bamboo clump, and in the board 37 jungle. I lined the British up across board 35 with four or five squads and a leader starting near the board division and who were planning on heading east into the board 37 jungle on turn one. On turns one and two I moved forward through the orchard and the jungle near the board division. The tanks led the way. Some of the Stuarts would use armored assault to aid the infantry's advance while others raced around behind the enemy to encircle them and cut their retreat. All of the Stuarts would get as close as possible to the enemy positions to maximize their effectiveness. I chose not to try for any 50 mm mortar smoke or OBA as there weren't many targets around and I wanted to save both for the assault on the buildings and pillboxes. The Japanese around the bamboo were revealed to be dummies while those in the jungle were real. I lost a few half squads in CC in that area but generally just kept moving past the light enemy resistance. There were not any pillboxes in the forward areas. I tried to make large jumps with my infantry each turn. I was nervous when moving the 9-2. I was afraid of two Jap heavy machine-guns catching him on the move and cutting him down. I tried to keep him behind several hindrances while moving. No killer stacks materialized so my boys kept pushing forward.

At this point I decided I would attack up the board division and try to keep my options open. I could swing left into the main buildings or drive ahead on board 37 to exit the map in force. The kunai fields in this area really slow down your infantry, especially those moving without the benefit of a leader. Moving through the orchard is much faster, but I wanted Mike to worry about my exiting board 37. I didn't want to just throw myself at the strong point of his defense. As I moved up, I was able to kill a Japanese squad or two which did not have enough support from their friends. My tanks were causing trouble and providing the advance with cover. I did have to take several bog checks as I kept forgetting that driving next to swamp entails a bog DR. Luckily I was passing the rolls. Mike shifted some Japanese over to cut me off, as he had trenches running across the board division from the buildings. There was also a pillbox or two in the front of the jungle near the south edge of board 37. Most of my squads were in the area of the board division as we approached the main line of resistance. Some had moved forward on each board. I called in one OBA Smoke mission on the buildings to screen my movement. As my 8-0 radio observer moved forward after calling in his mission, a hidden Jap crew

with a DC appeared in the bamboo clump I had avoided and chucked the DC at my leader. The resulting explosion KIAed the 8-0 and turned the radio into a twisted hunk of scrap. The crew, thanks to being Japanese, was merely flipped over after failing high MC. No more arty for me. Some of the old Japanese I had left behind reclaimed a hut from my rear guard with the help of a DC hero, boom! I just couldn't nail the guy before he put the explosives on my poor squad. My mortar crews and a trailing 4-5-8 squad with a DC became involved in a neat little sideshow struggle with these Japanese stragglers. I exacted a measure of revenge for my 8-0 leader by blowing up the Jap crew that killed him.

The main Japanese resistance was now in a trench line across the board division. The 10-1 was here along with both HMGs, an ATR, two mortars, and several manning crews and squads. I moved my 9-2 into position with the .50 cal and over a bit the 9-1 was directing my MMGs. Several Stuarts were also sighting in on this trench line. The Japanese mortar tried to Smoke us up but failed to get any Smoke. The other mortar was out of action as it's manning half squad was broken. The British suffered a few broken MMC in the area, but return fire routed the HMG crews and wounded the 10-1. The whole trench may have been cleared but the .50 cal decided to break down and stay out of action for a few turns. The Japanese were threatening to reinforce the trench and recrew the HMGs. This is where the Stuarts stepped up. Two Stuarts drove through the Japanese line, each passing multiple bog checks. They surrounded some broken Japanese infantry and caused their elimination for failure to rout. The Stuarts were key in taking out the trench line. Even with their help it took several turns and was quite a struggle.

The delay was costly as I did not have enough squads in position to gain a win through exit alone. I was going to have to take some of the building hexes. I was running short on time. My army was still in decent shape, especially my infantry. Two Stuarts were eventually killed through Reaction fire and a normal CC attack. Of the remaining four, one was Recalled by a Sniper, and another had a broken gun. The Japanese were hurting, but still had fair strength in and around the victory buildings. The battle on board 37 turned into a stalemate as neither of us had enough strength left there to work into an advantage. My tanks couldn't penetrate the jungle far enough to get at the last Japanese defenders there and I didn't have enough squads in the area to simply walk over the Japanese. I was able to take a few building hexes, a pillbox on board 35 and another on board 37, and exit a few squads, but it was not enough in the end. The loss of the Stuarts subtracted from my total which was short of the required twelve anyway. Given a few more turns I would have accomplished the objective. In retrospect, my roundabout approach to the victory buildings cost me. I thought I might be able to exit enough squads to win, but realized too late this was not possible. I then went for some buildings, but ran out of time. Next time I would dive straight in for the buildings with a large portion of my force and the tanks in the lead. This is the best option for the British, those buildings represent a lot of points. Even if the Japanese defense is centered here, as Mike's was, the British have the power to push the attack home. Especially if the Stuarts are used well and enjoy a little luck in surviving. A smaller flanking force can be used on board 37 to threaten an exit and keep the Japanese spread out a bit.

We enjoyed the scenario and look forward to trying it again. With the vast set up possibilities, the Japanese, the scenario has a high replay value. I have heard some players bemoan the length of A Tough Nut To Crack. It took us six hours to play all

ten turns (actually 9 1/2). This is not outrageous by any means. This scenario should see a lot of play at ASLOK where tournament time constraints aren't a problem. I personally prefer scenarios with some "meat" to them. Tiny scenarios do not hold much interest for me. I don't consider six hours overly long for an ASL match. If this one is taking you longer than that, you may want to consider speeding your play up a bit. ASL is more interesting for both players if it is kept moving along at a good clip. Our six hour play time did not include set up as Mike had set up the defense beforehand. 45 minutes would be a reasonable amount of time to set up the Japanese in this one. 30 minutes would be quick but probably attainable in a repeat playing. However long it takes to play, this scenario is worth the time and comes highly recommended.

Enjoy.

♣ TOURNAMENT NEWS

Reporting ASL tournaments to its readers is the main purpose of ASLUG. Any tournament news will be printed. Tournament Directors are encouraged to send in their tournament news as earlier as possible.

(♣) Denotes ASL tournaments which the Editor has personally attended and recommends highly.

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★★★★1994 ASL Open

January 21-23, 1994

Irving, TX

The '93 ASL Open, which has been called "The final jewel in the ASL triple crown", was a huge success by any standards. This year we have moved the site closer to DFW airport and to a hotel with more affordable rates. Bob McNamara will also attend as a special guest, we may yet talk him into playing.

Irving is the home of the World Champion Dallas Cowboys football team and borders DFW airport on the South and East. The new hotel facilities are top notch and we are within walking distance of many fast food franchises (there is a McDonald's just across the street). The hotel provides free transportation to and from DFW. We are planning to cater an affordable lunch on Saturday as well as

breakfast on Sunday and Brunch on Sunday for those players not wishing to leave the gaming tables.

For room reservations call:

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Room rates are still in negotiation, but will run around \$50.00/day for a double. This hotel has tons of amenities.

The same large cash prizes to the top finishers will be paid according to the revised schedule as follows: 1st \$400, 2nd \$300, 3rd \$200, 4th \$200. The format will be an AREA seeded modified Swiss style tournament. Try to make it if you can, we have other events planned and I will elaborate later.

To Preregister for the Open send check or Money order for \$25.00 to:

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In addition to ASL there will be several RP and boardgaming events.

✍ After Action Reports:

ATLANTICON '93

by Perry Cocke

Congratulations are due to Tim Phillips of Glen Burnie, MD for winning the single elimination ASL tournament at Atlanticon in Baltimore, MD June 18 to June 20. He beat runner-up Ross Sutton in the fifth round in Orange At Walawbum: elements of the IJA's "Chrysanthemum" Division, attacking under Tim's direction in March '44, gained the final victory-hex in the top of the seventh and final Turn, and were able to hold off the counterattack of Combat Team Orange (of Merrill's Marauders). Ross pinned the 447 in the victory hex with his Adjacent 8-0 and 667, and then moved next to the 447 with a stack consisting of a 9-1 and two 667s. A "killer" stack directed by the 10-1 over on the other hill gunned down the moving American stack with an "eyes" on a 12 even shot. The remaining Stealthy Marauders then Advanced into CC, Ambushed the 447, and needed a 6 to kill the squad off. The original 7 DR resulted only in Casualties, leaving the Japanese in Control of the hex at the end of the game.

Congrats also to Ross for a fine tourney, and to the other semi-finalists: Ken Dunn and Chuck Powers. All four are from Maryland, proving that the Glen Arm playtest group doesn't have a monopoly on talent in the area (Brian Youse, Chuck Goetz, and

myself were running the event, not playing). We must have done a good job, as I heard nothing but praise for the five scenarios we used. One was a remake from the COD Series 200, Chance D'une Affaire. The other four were translated from Tactiques, a glossy, professional-looking semi-annual from France, written all in French. We tweaked the scenarios a bit during our playtest, but only minor changes were needed. We both started and ended the tourney with Merrill's Marauders.

The first round took place in May '44 as Third Battalion, Galahad wrested away the Overlay 1 village from a small Japanese force and then defended against a counterattack. The second round saw Russian Black Sea Marines attacking through the Board 3 village towards a Rumanian Gun position (three 100mm ART pieces) outside of Odessa in Sept. '41. The third scenario found a powerful combination of Kreigsmarine Commandos and grunts attacking the Fortified Building 1X4 in June '41 in Liepaja, Latvia. (Tim's third round win was by virtue of a lone, pinned Russian leader remaining unbroken in the building). The semifinal was Chance D'une Affaire, with Green French Infantry and 3 FCM tanks attacking through a light German force and two Abandoned PzKw IIFs around Building 6N4 and into victory Buildings V9, X8, and X5 versus two waves of German reinforcements.

One of the scenarios was 6 Turns long, another was 9, and the other three were 7 Turns. Each featured 10-16 squads per side. Two scenarios were all Infantry, one had Guns, one had Guns and OBA, and one had AFVs on both sides. I feel each of the five is an interesting, balanced battle just right for tournament play. Chuck translated the four scenarios from Tactiques, plus a couple others we didn't use. All the scenarios from Tactiques we looked at seemed well-designed and well-developed. We were motivated to find not only high quality tournament-length scenarios, but also scenarios that none of our participants had seen before. Tactiques fit that description. All design credit should go to the Series 200 crew or the staff at Tactiques: editor-in-chief Theophile Monnier and the editorial board of Laurent Forest, Jean-Luc Bechenec, and Sylvain Ferreira at 37 rue du Depart, 75014 Paris.

Thanks go to Ray Woloszyn, Dave Stephens, Ken Joyner, and Keith Plymale for making the trip up from NC and helping to make the tournament a success. Kevin Meyer and Jim Turpin, coming in from PA and DE respectively, made their usual contribution of good play and high spirits. Guy Chaney came from VA (no McGrath!), but the rest were mostly Old Liners. The only losers were those who didn't come.

Chuck is writing an article for the Annual, to be published with the Tactiques scenarios, about our efforts in selecting and testing scenarios for the tourney, the tourney results, and tips for play - along the lines of Chaney's article in the current Annual. (Speaking of which, notice how my "friend" Guy never mentions in his article who won his tournament). I hope "our" scenarios are as well received as Guy's have been. I think they will be a welcome addition to the pile.

ATLANTICON '94 ASL Team Tournament

A trademark of ATLANTICON for some years now has been the ASL Team Tournament where old SL-GI scenarios, playtested by Jim Stahler and his playtest group, are given their baptism of fire in live action tournament play. These scenarios, usually

make their way into future issues of the "General", providing added depth to the ASL system as well as maintaining a link to the old system.

This year's tournament was handled by Winston Forrest, who, in Jim's absence, treated us to four "oldies, but goodies":

- 1) Faugh A' Ballagh (BR vs. GE) 1944
- 2) Last Defense Line (GE vs. FR) 1940
- 3) The Long Road (BR vs. VFR) 1942
- 4) In Rommel's Wake (GE vs. FR) 1940

Because of a low overall ASL turnout, players involved in the Single Elimination tournament and the lack of losses by the winning team of Guy Chaney and Ray Woloszyn, "In Rommel's Wake" was never played as there was no need for a fourth round. Players playing it after the tournament claimed it was evenly balanced.

"Faugh A' Ballagh" was a typical street fight amidst a hoard of rubble once the open ground was traversed. The rules of the tournament stipulated the two man teams would play opposite sides and under the same conditions such as random rubble, variable victory conditions, etc. The "Last Defense Line" was similar in nature to the first scenario but without the rubble or armored vehicles. Once the open ground was covered, a street battle ensued. Without effective use of the available OBA, the German was forced to duke it out with French SW's and Guns.

"The Long Road" had South African troops blitzing a roadblock in Madagascar. Despite the fact that it took a 3 to kill off the British armored cars with the only French AT weapon (an MMG), most games saw at least one of two armored cars wrecked.

All in all, the scenarios broke fairly evenly, as witnessed by the winning team going without a loss. The large volume of yet updated scenarios ensures that this tournament format at ATLANTICON

Ray Woloszyn

ASL SUMMER WARS

Eric Givler took this year's title at ASL SUMMER WARS, thus becoming the first local player to take top honors at the tournament. Eric won games against the likes of Bill Conner and Guy Chaney enroute to a 5-0 record. Second place went to Jeff Thompson (5-2) and Brian Youse (4-1), last year's winner finished third.

A total of 33 gamers turned out for the weekend along with a surprise visit by Rex Martin. Participants arrived from as far away as Florida, Ohio, Connecticut and North Carolina. The Baltimore and DC/Northern Virginia crowd was well represented, as were the local boys from PA.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the surprise visit by Rex Martin on Saturday afternoon. Rex had an unbound copy of the '93a Annual in tow for all to see and the first tournament play of a scenario from the annual occurred when Jim Turpin played Paul Kaster in "Sicilian Midnight". The scenario mix looks interesting, some desert, some PTO, some night and a French one. A special thanks to Rex for dropping by on Saturday.

One of the highlight matches came early as "Fish" took on Mike McGrath and gave him his first loss in '93 in a game of "The Sledgehammer". Quickly some of the other recognized favorites took losses: Perry Cocke fell to Guy Chaney, Guy and "Fish" both were handed losses by Eric. Heading into Sunday morning only Eric remained undefeated at 3-0 giving several with one loss a chance to place or show.

Jeff and Eric played "Fire and Rain" for the championship match on Sunday afternoon. Eric playing the British overcame Jeff's German defense to stake his claim as the champion. Brian overcame Jim Turpin in a game of "White Tigers" by manhandling an AT gun into position and destroying three Japanese tanks in one hex and rolling 'eyes' on the IFT result of a I.T MTR hit to destroy another.

A good time was had by all and I encourage those who couldn't make, to try and get to one of the other tournaments this year: Avaloncon or ASLOK. ASL Summer Wars '94 should occur sometime in early June. Information on a specific date will be forth coming at a future time.

Kevin Meyer

ORIGINS '93

Origins '93 witnessed one of the smallest attendance in Origins history. Nevertheless, the various ASL tourneys pulled in 41 gamers to compete in 3 separate tourneys. The first to kick off was the ASL Swiss with a field of 33 participants. Contenders were given the choice of over 40 new and unpublished ASL scenarios (the six published ASLUG scenarios were also included) most player commented on the near perfect balance of the scenario choices. The close balance along with the Australian handicap provisions made for a good game in nearly every match. Final results bear out this claim in that every scenario had near even win loss records.

I realize that relative skill with ASL is much more of a factor in ultimate victory in any scenario, but scenario balance should not suffer to remain perfectly historically accurate with the Orders of Battle. After all we are playing on entirely fictitious terrain, and in the case of Red Barricades Fictitious Orders of Battle. The only aspect of an ASL scenario which I will concede as being historically accurate are the unit designations and briefing/aftermath. If a designer holds true to the overall feel of the engagement he has done his job as far as I am concerned.

Let me get back to the tourney. After 3 days of play, Bob Chandler, David Hailey and Tom Slizewski emerged undefeated at four and zero. The luck of the draw paired up Bob with Tim Cooper who was the three and one with the best opponents record. Bob and Tim chose to play Appointment with Royalty, a Steven Sulzby design of a German defense of a captured Dutch airfield. Tim's Dutch troops were not quite up to the task as Bob won on CVPs with one CVP to spare. This solidified Bob's record at 5-0 and a shot for the overall win.

Meanwhile, Tom Slizewski and David Hailey (both at 5-0) had squared off in Camp Nibeiva. David had some problems with his Matildas immobilizing and even recalled one on a blown MA repair attempt. Tom's Italian armor (what was left of it) ran for cover behind the hillock and two of them were able to weather the British onslaught for the win. A very close game indeed. These fellows were forced to play the last game turn at a breakneck pace as the convention site closed a 5 pm.

Tom and Bob were awarded Co-winner and David took second with Tim bringing up the rear.

The single elimination tourney began Thursday night at 7pm. Players were given the choice of two out of three scenarios for each round and each player secretly picked his choices, if there was only one match that was the scenario played, if picks were identical players made a competitive dr for scenario choice. Australian handicapping was used to determine sides. The final four were Russell Mueller vs. John Anderson and Todd Hively vs. Tim Cooper.

Todd and John each won their games (Tim had come so close in both tourneys) and decided on Hart Attack (in this issue) as the final scenario. John took the Germans with Todd as the Brits. Todd's troops were not up to the task as John's reinforcements ran amok amongst the inexperienced-crew manned U.S. AFVs.

The Sunday deluxe DYO had eight players gunning it out side-by-side with four players per side, each playing a different nationality. Germans, Finns, Japanese, and Italians made up the Axis side, while U.S. Marines, Russians, Brits, and the Chinese rounded out the allies. Most players chose AFVs with FT's as their armored support. The Japanese AFV choices were nothing to get excited about, but Dirk took it all in stride and his Infantry did its normal good job. The Finns had no AFVs for the tourney and were given a bonus amount of infantry. It being 1945, the U.S. marines (7-6-8) along with a FT Sherman in support mopped up their opponents and a good time was had by all.

On a sour note, I was extremely disappointed in the overall tone of ORIGINS. I feel that Origins is NOT for the gamer, but for the manufacturer. Gamer facilities and comfort took a back seat to retail sales. I much prefer Avaloncon and will not attend another Origins as a personal boycott. In fact, I would boycott GAMA if I could find a way to do so.

TACTICAL BRIEFS

This column is devoted to do and don't hints. Contributors will be promoted at the rate of 1 rank per 5 printed hints.

When you are faced with assaulting an enemy in ground floor locations which your AFV's cannot get a LOS to, but *can* see the upper levels of these locations, you can fire smoke at these upper floors and the smoke round falls to the base level of the hex. This will screen your assault and not expose your AFVs to enemy fire.

(you could also use this method to void 1/2 level LOS obstacles in your LOS by firing at an upper level)

- Pvt. Guy Chaney

Spraying fire can be devastating if you direct it with a (-) DRM leader.

- Pvt. Guy Chaney

(Well, that's all I received for this issue. If you guys like to read these pieces, please send in your ideas. We can't rely on a small group to provide all of these ASL tips.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASLUG Issues #5 will be mailed after Avaloncon. This will allow the inclusion of an Afteraction Report from one of the major ASL events. I hope this slight delay is not an inconvenience.

Thanks for your patience and support,
FORT

RANDOM SELECTIONS

Mark Nixon

INTRODUCTION

At the risk of burdening everyone with my opinions, I want to spend some time considering the state of the ASL hobby, with emphasis on a perceived murmur of Elitism in the ranks. I find this a rather difficult topic to deal with, and the various subtopics of the ensuing account may, at times, appear to be off the mark and straying from the point. But if I seem to be rambling and adrift fear not, for it is merely a reflection of this complex situation.

Elitism

There have been scattered accusations that our favorite little hobby is controlled by a small knot of players, be they "Tournament", "East Coast", "European", "Ohio", "Michigan", or whatever. Of course there never seems to be any specific identification or actual naming of names, leaving us to suppose an "Elitist" must be anyone who professes playing ASL in a manner different than we, ourselves, prefer. Supposedly, these "Elitists" have fabricated a set of secret rules which only they know how to use, and which they shield from "outsiders" (another unidentifiable group). It becomes very difficult to confront such a concept, as it is so conveniently nebulous we can identify no specific fact, person or thought to address other than the fear of Elitism itself. Ideas and concepts which draw their strengths from emotions (religion, nationalism, etc...) are difficult to support, debate and disprove. If an ASL player has become convinced the hobby is ruled by an Elitist minority I am sure I cannot change his mind by stating here that no such Elitist group exists. I cannot prove this any more than I can prove that the player displaying those fears is not, himself, a member of some "anti-Elitist" ASL minority. For that matter, I cannot prove that I am not a member of some Elitist or anti-Elitist group either, although you can be assured that if I suspected there were some Elitist group running the ASL hobby, I would immediately apply to the anti-Elitists to join their ranks and to inquire whether they might be looking for a President.

Proof is not what this account is about. Rather than state my opinion that the Elitist scare is groundless in a repetitive and boring fashion over the next several pages, I intend to review the status of ASL as a hobby, and here impose upon you to consider, by example, a brief account of my own experience with ASL.

From 1978 through 1986 I played SL and then ASL with a small group of avid fans of the game in the Toledo and Cleveland areas. We had a blast with the games and seemed to fare well on those occasions when we played at the few small tournaments in existence at the time. We felt we were playing the game rather well, and saw the proof of that belief in our tournament wins. We even worked on the GI and ASL playtests and received quite flattering feedback from Don Greenwood regarding our contribution and effort. But sometime in about 1986 or so I played Bill Conner (Fish then, Grofaz now) and learned, to his delight I am sure, that his play of the game was actually light years advanced of my own. Or at least I found Bill and his friend Darryl Burke were professing a quite different approach to the game, and specifically to rules interpretation, than I had considered. Bill and Darryl opened a whole new world

of ASL thinking for me. Now, the whole point of this little story is that to some degree I certainly did resent the fact that here were a set of interpretations and clarification's of the game I had not seen before, and they most certainly did influence the way the game was played. How could it be fair that some players had this "inside info" and were able to claim that was how the game was to be played? (See "MAC SEZ" section) With our present topic of Elitism in mind, does this sound familiar?

I don't mean to suggest your experience will parallel my own, but with this example I think we see the potential for thoughts of Elitism in my own thinking had I regarded the attitude of more experienced players like Bill and Darryl in that matter. What I'm saying is that the door is open for ASL players to perceive Elitism by virtue of the fact that some players are more experienced than they, and tend to insist the game be played by the rules as written in the ASLRB, as further clarified by errata and, unfortunately it may seem, as understood and accepted by those who have worked hard at comprehending the application of the rules for many years.

So we have some ASL players who have invested a tremendous amount of time and energy (ed.: and no small sum of cash) over several years trying to master this most complex game. Can we blame them for insisting we play by rules deciphered only with the extensive effort they have committed? Is this Elitism or Experience talking? Let us not forget the often overlooked fact that the exceeding complexity of the game itself ensures a laborious journey for those attempting to jump-start themselves into the hobby at the "expert" level. All of those currently at that level have gotten there after lengthy and at times painful study (painful in the sense of tournament losses at the hands of experts themselves). To exemplify this, consider the ASL journey of someone other than myself, someone you all might know at least in name, Gary Fortenberry (I would rather Mark had chosen someone else for his "This Is Your Life" spiel. For one thing, having an author submit an article with the publisher of the magazine as his main example is embarrassing, for another, it leaves said publisher open for shots by the author and I am sure Mark won't disappoint us with sensible restraint, as sense has never been Mark's forte.)

In 1983 Gary showed up at the ORIGIN's GI Tournament I was running and played his way into the semi-finals, losing to the eventual winner (who had to beat Bill Conner in the final). It was obvious from his play Gary knew the game and was a player to be respected, but then he seemed to disappear (USN) (how could we be so lucky?) only to surface (from what depths we won't consider here) at the 1988 ORIGIN's ASL event. While there he played Bill Conner in a friendly game and recalls getting a certain part of his anatomy handed to him, and I managed to brush him aside in Ripe Pickings without a whole lot of sweat (I had no PzV's for him to roll CH's against).

To be blunt, here was a player you would expect to be a heavy hitter, and yet his departure from the game at a time when everything shifted from SL to ASL had cast him back into the ranks of the near-roskies. All of which might have been meaningless, except that Gary loved the game and determined to work his way back to where he could win at it. So he showed up at ASLOK and set a record for playing more games than anyone had, although he did lose most of them (I think I had a winning record at my first ASLOK, but Mark has the actual PIS info). But that was not surprising, considering who he was playing. It would have been easy for Gary to suggest the heavy hitters were playing in an Elitist fashion and that it was unfair to newer players operating without

benefit of this background information. (At least this would have given us all a break from Gary's constant whining about his dice - Sheesh!) But to his credit, Gary saw through the canopy of his losing tournament record and arrived at the conclusion it was experience he was still lacking (ignoring my contention it was character he lacked). So he kept at it, and began to win the local tournaments in the Texas area. Not only that, but he continued to come to ASLOK, where he soon became a highly regarded player, and, finally, the event winner in 1992. Keep in mind this did not happen overnight, but, as the story shows, involved a lot of hard work at the game over several years. And this for a player who we all knew was already an astute and very perceptive gamer. Even with those advantages in his favor and prior mastery of SL, it was a long haul to get to the top of ASL. And don't forget, the stay at the top may be very short indeed, for there is no +3 TEM on the top of the hill.

(If this is hinting that Mark thinks he has what it takes to knock me off that hill of his, I suggest to him that while the only TEM I may claim is +1 for Height Advantage there are several firer-based DRMs which must be carefully examined; First, +1 for a CXed firer, Mark is ancient and at the very least, his arthritis will cause him to falter; Second, at least +1 for LV, again Mark's aging body will fail him as his sight just isn't up to the task of spotting the enemy for accurate fire (even though I have been described as a large target), and from the distance at which must shoot (being nowhere near the summit of this metaphorical hill of skill) the LV DRM must be around +3 or +4; Third, Mark's skill at fire direction must be examined. He would rate a 7-0 or 8-0 if only he would play me a game at ASLOK that counted for tournament play. While it is true that he and I play a game before the tourney starts which has become a tradition (I don't recall his winning any of these games), it has been several years since Mark has offered to play a for-real game, at least one which is balanced (Come to think of it, I do recall his winning "Slamming the Door" as the Russians, real tough to accomplish). Perhaps his age is once again showing and the meat has become too tough for his tired-old teeth. His lack of desire to play for keeps drops his status to 6+1, another +1 DRM. At this rate, with Mark directing the shooting, I could stay at the top of the ASLOK hill until I die of old age.)

There is no end to such stories, for we all have our own and I don't even mean to imply the ones I know are better than any others. I hope to have shown that all of us, rookies and heavy hitters alike, agree this is a very difficult game to play well. While it is true each player can seem to play with expertise within his own little gaming crowd, reaching out to enter the world-wide realm of ASL players involves a whole different perspective. Left to ourselves, we will all find ways of interpreting these rules so that we can play the game on a day-to-day basis with our local competition. The rules are pretty good, but not perfect. When we get together with players from other parts of the country and world, whose interpretation of those rules should we use? The experienced player or the rookie? I think it is a rhetorical question, but let us not assume the rookie's interpretation should be ignored either. Often times, a fresh look at old rules will uncover some new meaning or glitch previously missed. So please don't be put-off by what may appear to be a hard-headed response to your interpretation. If the player you have mentioned it to doesn't seem receptive at that particular moment, make a note of your thought and approach someone else on the matter at a more opportune time. For that matter, not all the heavy hitters are involved with writing/interpreting rules in the first place; the gaming tables is really not

the place to try to resolve rules matters, despite the fact it is where most of the questions arise.

To this point I believe it can be seen there is ample opportunity for a player to develop feelings of Elitism in the ASL hobby, but only if that player adopts a narrow-minded perspective. After all, the hobby itself is quite an Elitist gathering, for we are talking about only some thousands of players, and if we limit our perspective to those who read these words and those in the other ASL "zines", we are dealing with only a couple hundred players. Are the theoretical Elitists the players who are writing about the game in these zines? I have to think anyone willing to share his ideas in a public manner like this could hardly be an Elitist. Since these ASL writes include just about every heavy hitter we could name, who does that leave to fill the ranks of the Elitists? Could a player who is not at the top of the game and not taking part in the composition and clarification of the ASLRB be, in any manifestation of imagination, a member of this feared Elitist movement? Again, we're talking rhetorical question here; the thought of Elitism propagated by players who are not among the heavy hitters, the playtesters, the rules makers and those writing about the game renders this an improbable movement.

THE "NAME" GAME

Okay, I admit it. I share as much guilt as anyone for helping to create the idea some players are what we have come to call "name" players. At one point back in the late '80's there were no such "name" players for the simple reason no one had written about the players of the game in the only publication available at the time, THE GENERAL. Well, Jon Mischon and Joe Suchar did mention a few names in some of their articles: Bill Conner, Eric Baker, Pat Jonke, and Andrea Cantatore, and this seemed like a good thing. Without such mention of the "top" players of the game, the only visible names of ASL were Don Greenwood, Bob McNamara and Rex Martin, as well as the few writing for the GENERAL; Mischon and Suchar, Bob Medrow, Jim Stahler and yours truly. Were any of us the best players? Probably not, although I have never played these fine fellows and secretly suspect McNamara, at least, probably would be a heavy hitter if only he could manage the time to play the game once in awhile. Rex and Don are both proficient at some couple hundred games, a manner of expertise certainly equal to, but not quite the same as being an ASL heavy hitter. Probably the best known name in the mid 80's who was also a top ASL player was Charlie Kibler. I did get to play him at ASLOK '86 and his Germans cleared the field of my US in First Action, along the way enlightening me on several correct rules interpretations. Did I mind? Of course not, although it certainly was embarrassing to find out so late (after completing several ASL playtests) that I had been playing some important rules wrong. Was I glad to find the correct way to play? Absolutely! What a pleasure to learn something new and play the game a little better. Less fuss, less muss.

But also in attendance at that first ASLOK were others who played as well or better than even Charlie: like Bill Conner, Ray Woloszyn, and Darryl Burke. It only seemed natural to start giving some credit to the top players as a means of focusing the growing ASL hobby. There must be players we can identify with the hobby in order to gain personality for the hobby in general. I also happen to believe that winning is not the only thing ASL is about, and identifying players who are notable for things other than winning is also a good idea. In fact, I believe one of the best reasons for bringing attention to some of these players has been, and continues to be, to encourage them to write about the game so that they

might share their knowledge and their enjoyment of this hobby. So identifying these "best" players has been at least somewhat a deliberate affair motivated by the desire to coerce the top dogs to also start writing about the game. What better way to learn how to play the game well when you don't have an "old pro" in the neighborhood, than from the pen of good players.

Personally, I truly do enjoy reading those tactical rules insights by Gary which he wasn't even putting into print as recent as one and two years ago. I get a charge out of every McGrath/Chaney bit of insight on the scenarios, whether I happen to agree or disagree with each and every judgment they pronounce. (It sure is fun to see someone else put his name on the firing line like this!) And who among us has failed to read with delight the eloquence and humor of Perry Cocke, perhaps the heavy hitter wielding the sharpest pen of all?

Is it harmful to identify such so-called "name" players? Maybe the answer to that question depends, more than anything, upon whether or not you know these people yourself. A player who has met some of these "name" players has had a chance to realize that there is not really anything at all extraordinary about them; probably the most unusual bit of trivia we could identify is the rather peculiar fact that for some reason these people have spent some inordinate amount of time with ASL, enough so that they have gained a bit of a reputation within the hobby itself. Perhaps a player who hasn't met these "name" players, but knows about them only from what has been written in the ASL zines, muttered in dark alleys and, of course, splashed across the headlines of the supermarket tabloids, could have a notion someone is trying to make something about them. If that perception is what has come across to anyone I see it as truly unfortunate and I am certainly sorry for any part I have played in conveying that image; that is not the message anyone intended to advertise. The point of identifying "name" players is not to bolster anyone's ego or to suggest any certain individuals are better people or even better ASL players than the rest of us. Heavens no! They probably aren't the best players in the land, although for all we know they are among the best who have come forward and been identified. Here's a call to come out and take-on these bozos and show us what you've got! These are the guys to shoot for, so study-up and smite them down. You have the promise of a good game at the very least.

TOURNAMENTS

Of course the place to find those "name" players is at the various tournaments. I think it is quite unfortunate several articles have appeared in the zines the past two years which paint a misleading image of ASL tournaments, and even extend that poor image to the top players themselves. You all know the story, and it leads to more ammo for the Elitism scare, in which the grizzled veteran takes on a fresh rookie in some scenario and virtually shreds him of not only his troops and tanks, but of his self respect as well. I'm here to tell you this is an extravagant exaggeration of reality, never mind that it seems to be the message sent in several past accounts of tournament play. Oh it can happen, but only on a rare occasion with a player who is most certainly not amongst the small crowd of top players. Sure there are "bad apples" in ASL, just as in any other facet of life. To expect otherwise would involve a rather immature assumption. You won't find the good players condoning such behavior. To a man, the players whom I regard at the top of the hobby would severely chastise and even verbally abuse the heavy hitter who was caught behaving in this manner. The zines seem to have painted the image of the "Grogard Out for Blood" (GOB) as though it were a

normal occurrence, but I think these accounts have mostly just suffered from a lack of refinement in the writing/editing process (see "Writing and Reading" section). The authors/editors were primarily concerned with describing just how very difficult it is to win major ASL tournament and, along the way, sort mishandled the image of those who seem to be winning these events.

The not so surprising truth about ASL tournaments is that something like 99% of those who attend will tell you, if you will only ask them, that they enjoyed the tournament thoroughly. To someone who believes the only reason for attending a tournament is to win it, this would appear to be quite an exaggeration, but I have found that ASL players enjoy the game, usually whether they win or lose. There are, after all, many types of ASL tournaments, many types of ASL players and many different attitudes possible towards tournaments. Were we to assume everyone who attends an ASL tournament does so to win and win alone, we could easily calculate the success/failure of the tournament by the size of the crowd. In this case, a small event which draws eight players would be a smashing success, for one eighth of the participants would go away happy, whereas something like ASLOK would have to be a dismal failure since only one player of over 150 would leave smiling. Call this a screwball example if you like, but the point is ASL players may play the game to win but they don't invest large quantities of time, effort and money to travel to tournaments for the express purpose of becoming the big winner. Almost every player is too smart to pin all his hopes of enjoyment on the condition of winning. Sure everyone wants to win at least once in awhile or more often than not or maybe even most of the time, but to insist on winning all the time is an attitude I have not seen in ASL players.

Instead, I believe players attend these tournaments for a variety of reasons. At every event you can find players attending their first ASL gathering, and these are often the most interesting players to meet, for they will tell you those once-in-a-lifetime first impressions as they step into the tournament scene. There are players in attendance looking for new opponents, possibly to find out how they stack-up against players outside their local gaming sphere, and there are players looking to renew old friendships or even to seek "revenge" on a favored opponent for a past loss (I'll get you Eric!!). Some are looking forward to hammering their favorite ASL editor (Rex, Marc, Gary, Rob, Kurt....) or maybe show-off their latest scenario designs. No doubt more than a few players have come to check-out these "name" players just to see if McGrath really is as ugly as everyone says or Baker as much a cheeseball as the legend suggests. I think many attend as a vacation from their daily routine: what better way to escape reality than to spend a day, three days or even a week playing ASL and getting totally lost in a cloud of dice rolling? And, yes, probably at least a few come just to enjoy all the beautiful women who flock to every gathering of ASL Stud-He-Men. Yes, there is always that.

What does it all mean? It means when you go to an ASL tournament you will find rookies and old pros and every level of experience in between. You'll find serious gamers playing to win and you'll find party animals more interested in drinking a beer or two, swapping stories and rolling massive quantities of dice. You'll meet gregarious types who laugh and banter and call across the room to other friends as well as quiet players who shake your hand at the beginning and end of your game and betwixt speak not another word unrelated to the play of the game at hand. Winners and losers will be on all sides, and after awhile most of the winners will be losers and the losers winners. In the end, expect almost all to walk away

very happy and satisfied. Will there be any unsavory incidents? Oh, maybe, but probably not. It's not a life-and-death situation, there may be an ugly scene, but no more than one would normally expect with so many individuals operating at such close quarters over such an extended period. Take away the game ASL, and leave these same individuals together for this same amount of time and I guarantee they'll be at each others throats long before it would happen with the game there to hold their attention.

Winning, Losing and Enjoying the Game.

We probably all agree that playing to win is the only way to play ASL, or any wargame, for that matter. But while we strive for a win in most every game it is also undeniable we cannot hope to actually win all the time. Winning and losing are part of any game, and I truly believe we are all mature enough to understand this. Indeed, I don't even think fear of losing is a concern in the Elitism issue. However, I do believe there is concern that Elitism leads to unfair control of the game by individuals who, by virtue of their stranglehold on interpreting the ASLRB, stand to dictate to others just how the game is to be played, which could be expected to give these individuals an advantage at the gaming table. So while we all reasonably expect to lose some share of games, the player ascribing to this Elitism scare might perceive his chances of losing escalate as he enters a game with the reported Elitist. Probably worse, this would certainly affect his enjoyment of the game at hand, and if his suspicions were serious enough I could visualize him even refusing to play the game.

Let me emphasize at this point that I do not happen to share these thoughts of Elitism, but I do not deny that they may seem real enough for some ASL players. I think it is quite understandable how these impressions could be generated because of the manner of discussion rules topics sometimes receive not only in the zines, but at some of the tournaments and in Email scare appears real enough for some players that it unhinges their enjoyment of the game. Whether their fears are based on reality or fantasy is immaterial, for the perception of Elitism is there and requires no proof to register as a legitimate fear.

So now I think it clear we can see some players willing to admit they will win some and lose some, but voicing a legitimate worry that some other players are interpreting and "fixing" rules which will change the official way the game is played. Notice I am referring to the "official" way to play the game, for it is one thing to be concerned that the game might not play the way you have interpreted the rules on your own and with your local buddies (a version of the rules which may easily have no correlation with the ASLRB whatsoever), but quite another matter to be concerned about someone else trying to alter the way the game is played by using variants from the ASLRB. Clearly, anyone condoning the use of variants would be guilty of what we might call Elitism, but be careful, for this works both ways. The ASL old-pro super-grogard heavy-hitter grizzled-veteran who foists his own home-grown rules upon the ASL public could be at fault here, but so could the raw recruit who insists his own interpretation of the rules is the correct approach. Enough bull-headedness from either or both and our enjoyment of the game will be suffering whether we win or lose.

THE ASLRB, ERRATA AND VARIANTS

Let me say up front that I will try to enforce a view of ASL strictly according to the ASLRB and the AH generated ERRATA (that which appears in THE GENERAL, THE ANNUALS and

the various MODULES). I mention this because there most certainly are others playing the game who take a more casual approach to the rules. Of course the ASLRB, as I have mentioned before, is not perfect either, so the door is wide open to the games of "Interpretation, Logic and Realism". Also, enough potential errata is generated that AH probably cannot hope to publish all of it, which may be a bit fortunate since too much of it and we'd be swimming in a sea of ERRATA pages. Maybe the best policy is to print only the items which seem most significant, a practice which seems to be in effect at present.

Maybe Bob McNamara (Mac) has a better grasp on these rules than anyone else. I believe this is true. The blank spaces in between the lines of his ASLRB are filled with neatly penciled, magnifying-glass-required-size notes of rules clarification's, changes and notes. Most of the time when I have mentioned what I think is some newfound glitch in the ASLRB, Mac has been able to turn to that rulebook and there is the matter, already addressed, already with a "fix" in mind, and all just waiting for the day (which may never come) when the whole ASLRB complete with ERRATA could, theoretically, be issued as the RASLRB (REALLY ADVANCED SLRB). Well, maybe this is just a bad joke, for nothing about this has been mentioned from AH, and I most certainly am not any spokesperson for that company. And Mac's copy of ASLRB, well, copies are not available and it might even be considered property of AH in any case. I don't see Elitism here, for AH is the owner of the game and Mac is an employee. This is where the rules are stored; Mac is the ASL Guru and his ASLRB the Holy Grail of ASL. Pardon me for that, but there you have my assessment of the situation.

With this in mind it is probably not surprising that I would equate variants of the of the ASLRB as heresy. Should players begin using ad hoc rules to play the game, very soon there will no longer be one united ASL hobby, but just a lot of splinter groups playing the game in whatever fashion they happen to find appealing, easy or convenient. When members from these various splinter groups try to get together to play real ASL, problems will arise. Look what happened to the game THIRD REICH. Five different versions of the rules and just try to find a new player who wants to play the game the way you like to play it. Look at SL. Four different levels of the game with players choosing which level they prefer, mixing and matching rules from the four rubella's, and you see the beginning of the disintegration of a great game. With ASL there is the one ASLRB ("...one ring to rule them all and in the darkness bind them") and the only threat to it at the moment appears to be variants, by which I mean home-grown rules, local interpretations, house-rules and so on. Don't get me wrong; some of the house-rule kind of thing is probably a good thing in your local gaming group, but don't expect to meet anyone else willing to play it your way.

Okay, so now I'm going heavy on the opinions, sorry. But there you see where I stand and we can work from there. I hope it is clear that while I do not perceive anything I am willing to call "Elitism" (a conscious effort on the part of some players to exclude the masses from rules/play judgments), I do worry about splinter groups veering off from mainstream ASL into a vast array of variant players and local clubs, unable to come back together to play real ASL due to their divergent practices. Those who fear Elitism want a united hobby (as best I can tell) and I want a united hobby. I also believe the "theoretical Elitists" also want a united hobby as well, and it is a shame we cannot identify this group as individuals, for then we could approach them and discuss the matter. But we still don't really know if there are Elitists or not. If they are out there and

trying to get us all to play ASL the way they like to play it, I don't see their desire as one the rest of us do not share, for wouldn't we all like everyone to play the game "our way"? But, of course, the problem is that none of us have a total grasp on what is exactly correct, not even Mac (gasp!), and so we are left with a bit of a struggle. This gets back to what was said earlier: the game is not easy and the rules are not perfectly clear. The players (Elitist or non-Elitist) who expects others to play only as he, himself, plays, is functioning on an unrealistic and immature assumption or two.

MAC SEZ

Ah Ha! It begins to look like the last section was just a set-up for this one. But the MAC SEZ phenomenon is, believe it or not, a part of the game. This represents that section of rules interpretation which is midway through the process of becoming errata or not becoming errata, what has also been affectionately referred to in the past as "Potential Future Errata". These matters have been brought to Mac's attention and received answers, which must make them official decisions....well, kinda sorta. Some were sent in as NUTMAIL and have been returned with the answers written (usually in red ink). Some are just verbal replies straight from Mac, for remember we are dealing here with players who also playtest at AH as well as some who do, on occasion, speak with Mac personally or via phone. You can see the worry over Elitism oozing out of these sentences.

Avalon Hill does offer a very fine service with the promise of answers to rules questions, and many players make good use of it. Trying to speak directly or via phone with Mac might be a bit more awkward unless you happen to know him personally, so most players rely on the NUTMAIL method of obtaining answers for rules questions, or simply waiting around in hopes someone else will catch the glitch and eventually get it onto the ERRATA list. This latter method is actually about the equivalent of no method at all, but I bet this is how most of us handle rules questions which come up during the course of an average game. It does not get written down, or even if it does the question does not make it to AH, and the situation is shoved aside, forgotten until the next game it occurs.

So what do you do when you are playing a scenario and your opponent whips out a NUTMAIL response from AH which changes the way you think the situation at hand is handled? There it is in writing, straight from AH, MAC SEZ! Well, let's not allow this case to be overstated. In some 1000 ASL games I have played I don't recall this ever happening to me, although I have to imagine it must have. My experience is not yours and maybe the people I usually play just don't bother with the NUTMAIL routine. So maybe you'll be facing a NUTMAIL response once in awhile, but probably not very often. More likely, you'll face a player who claims the situation must be played in some certain manner because, "That was changed/clarified by Mac/Fish/Gary /Perry/Nixon/McGrath/Chaney/Rout Report/ATP/FFE/ASLUG or such and such and on and on. This is the ultimate level of the MAC SEZ syndrome, of now we have graduated beyond the plateau of considering the written word, detached all restraining lines and drifted into the nebula of I HEAR MAC SEZ.

Understand, no one has committed any crime to this point, but I think you can begin to see the problem as we have players referring to a NUTMAIL reply not even in their possession, at which point the questions of accuracy, memory and legitimacy are easily arguable. It means little to me for an opponent to claim, "But Billy Bob has a letter from the Hill....".

This might make me anxious to meet up with Billy Bob, but doesn't do much to convince me on-the-spot that I need to change my interpretation of the ASLRB. I'm not accusing my opponent of foul play, but hey, we're playing by the ASLRB, not by Billy Bob's personal correspondence. Heavens, in one case I even had a piece of NUTMAIL in my own possession while corresponding with another player who, nevertheless, wrote to me that MAC SAID the opposite of what was written on my NUTMAIL reply. So should I go with what MAC SEZ in writing, or go with what another player writes that MAC SEZ? Enough heavy thought devoted to this sort of foolishness will make Mark an old man in a hurry.

I am sorry to report that there is no Black and White on this (is this starting to sound a bit familiar?). The NUTMAIL info is very helpful and I'm glad AH offers the service and that Mac devotes as much time as he does to it. A lot of valuable ERRATA comes out of it and a lot of players get answers they can use in their day-to-day gaming. However, we all should bear in mind that a NUTMAIL answer is not quite on equal footing with the official ERRATA. Also, the questions themselves are often so poorly worded or disorganized, that the answer you think you have via NUTMAIL may not really be what you would like it to be. NUTMAIL has a place, and MAC SEZ is not without meaning, but the ASLRB and ERRATA still rule. The latter are available to everyone keeping tabs on the game through THE GENERAL, THE ANNUALS, and the new MODULES, while the former are available only to the individuals who utilize the service offered by AH and the generosity of Mac. If anything, I would push for more of NUTMAIL and MAC SEZ info to be formalized as ERRATA. Maybe that would push us to ERRATA OVERLOAD, but I see a lot of valuable info there which could stand the exposure.

ZINES and E-MAIL

The past two years have brought a wealth of ASL ZINES and EMAIL into the ASL gaming arena. Communication amongst ASL players has never been more profuse, but has it ever been more confusing? Suddenly many players are able to broadcast their views of the game and we are all a bit flooded with the whole wide world of ASL. What can compete with that initial thrill of plugging into EMAIL and finding other players immediately available to discuss the game? How can even THE ANNUAL match the outpouring of the amateur press which has even begun to publish scenarios of approximate caliber? (Well, okay< the color and quality of THE ANNUAL still reign, and twice a year is an improvement, but look how far the ZINES have come!) We are now reading what many more players think about this game than ever before, and somewhere along the line each reader must decide what to believe and what not to believe. Not that anyone is deliberately printing inaccurate info, but let's be real and admit some of the material is just not quite right, some is just plain wrong, and much of the EMAIL chatter is really nothing more than exactly that, chatter. This is the "fast food" of ASL publishing.

But this is the way these mediums are intended to be. Of course they are not as refined as THE ANNUAL and THE GENERAL. These are not professional publications but open forums in which anyone can express his own viewpoints. Still there will be some mighty fine pieces of ASL material to be found there, but the other major difference between these amateur offerings and those from The Hill is the size of the readership users. While I don't profess to

know how many readers buy a copy of THE ANNUAL I have to think it is in the thousands, whereas the size the size of the ASLUG FFE/ATP ROUT crowd seems to be more like about 200-300 or so. What's more, it is the same 200-300 reading all four of them, not 200 or 300 apiece. And how many ASL players are active on the EMAIL facility? I really have no idea, but is it terribly inaccurate to imagine the number is probably about 200-300? So one could argue this is evidence of an Elitist crowd-the players willing able to spend money to buy the ZINES and EMAIL access. But I don't think this is the Elitist contingent we are seeking, for the whole scare appears to have originated from within this 200-300 player "core".

The ZINES and EMAIL could be used to promote Elitist play. In fact, much to my own consternation I have witnessed every one of them promoting variant play at one time or another. But none have made a serious effort to actually encourage variant play. Most certainly, none have even remotely suggested variant play within a sphere of gamers to the exclusion of other gamers (the heart of the Elitism fear).

Instead, the ZINES and EMAIL appear to be safe havens wherein the small group of 200-300 heavily serious ASL players are able to banter and kick around ideas, to bounce wild interpretations off one another and generally hammer out their thoughts on the game without fear that anyone will take any of it too awfully serious. Serious we can leave for THE ANNUAL and THE GENERAL.



Mark plans to continue the above with the following sections:

- Writing and Reading
- Rules Disputes
- Rule A.2
- Tournament Burn-out
- Honesty vs the Alternative
- The Misconception of Interpretation
- Logic and Realism
- Generalization/Simulation
- Hey! It's only a game!!

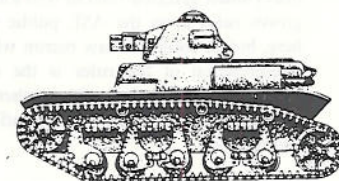
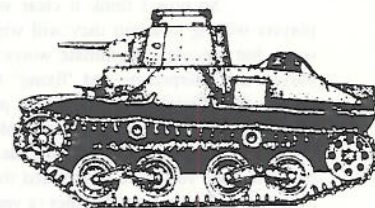
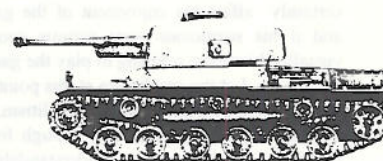
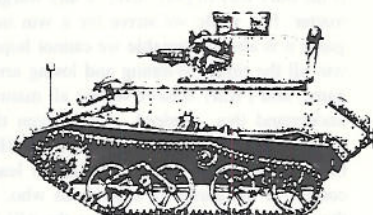
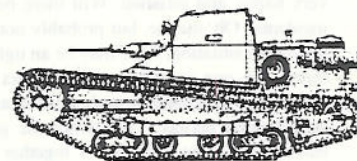
Over the Next Hill:

- The promise of a Replay per issue will materialize with Desert Citadel.
- Two new scenarios including a brand new vehicle complete with notes.
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CONTEST #3

The first person to correctly identify the following AFVs will receive 1 free issue of ASLUG.

Answers in ASLUG #5.



AFTER ACTION REPORT: GAMEX 1993

LOS ANGELES, 28-31 MAY 1993

By Mark Neukom

The Southern California *Advanced Squad Leader* Club held their spring tournament in conjunction with the large Gamex convention at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel over Memorial Day weekend. Traditionally, these SCASLC events consist of two tournaments held over the course of a weekend, one each on Saturday and Sunday. As a result, the emphasis tends to be on shorter, "quick play" style scenarios, and there is a good deal of encouragement provided for Tournament Directors to design their own original scenarios for use in the tournament. Since there usually aren't enough rounds in the tournaments to allow only one undefeated player to emerge from the field of combatants, several scoring systems have evolved that assign "tournament points" to the players at the conclusion of each game. These "tournament points" are given for performance in the individual scenarios, and at the end of the day's tournament the player that racked up the most "tournament points" is declared the winner. One of two of these scoring systems is usually used: the "Arizona Scoring System" or the "Sulzby Scoring System." Generally, the "Sulzby" system is based solely on the assessment of game Victory Points, while the "Arizona" system offers the further subtleties of rewards for inflicting casualties on your opponent as well as keeping your own force intact.

In December of 1992 I was asked to consider running one of the tournaments for the upcoming May Gamex event by Steve Sulzby, our SCASLC president. Having never run a tournament before, I was a bit apprehensive about taking on the responsibility; however, Steve assured me that I would have much help from experienced Tournament Directors in guiding me along the right path. True to his word, Steve was more than willing to help, as was Dan Plachta; both of them spent several hours on the phone with me providing guidance. Additionally, Steve provided me with a copy of his scoring system, and also an excellent series of guidelines titled "Tournament Director's Do's and Don't's", in which he covered nearly all the steps of the "scenario design for tournament" process, as well as Tournament Conduct tips. Since I have been a fledgling scenario designer for some time, I couldn't help but get excited at the prospect of designing an entirely new set of scenarios for use in one specific event of my choosing, and I accepted Steve's offer.

From the beginning I was determined to have a common theme tying together all of the scenarios of the tournament, and since I am a vehicle-oriented player I decided that this common element would be the American M3 Medium Tank. I set about designing my four scenarios, one each in Burma (1945), Libya (1942), Russia (1943), and Tunisia (1942). Unfortunately, outside playtests under the direction of Tim Drushal/Jon Moore, Jim Millard, David McCarty, and Gary Fortenberry revealed drawbacks in several of the situations. The Libyan scenario wasn't well suited to tournament play since it had a very low unit density for one side, and the Russian scenario had too many vehicles involved to be able to be played in under three hours by the average player. Finally, the Tunisian scenario never got off the ground since I couldn't find an appropriate action involving solely American troops on the attack. Regrettably, I soon dropped this particular "M3 Medium Tank" thematic concept (the Russian scenario, *Beyond the Pakfronts*, later became the first ASLUG scenario).

With only one usable scenario (the Burma M3 scenario), I went back to the drawing board. I had been working on several special projects for some time, and I decided that this tournament might be a good venue in which to try them out on the gaming public. The first project involved rare vehicles, of which I have had the German section finished for some time (including new counters). I went to work on a scenario involving the German *Sturm*tiger, and it became the second scenario in my new three-game format. For the last scenario, I dipped

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into another project that I have been working on for some years, *Modern ASL*, and presented a scenario taking place in Panama in 1989 as the final scenario of the tournament (see elsewhere in this issue for more information on the *Modern ASL* project). Outside playtests of the *Sturmtiger* scenario (under the title *Twilight's Last Gleaming*) indicated much promise, and I set about preparing the Panamanian scenario (titled *Grounding Noriega*) for its playtest. I was in need of intensive playtest time to get these scenarios ready in time for the tournament, and I also needed a playtester well versed in the Night rules since I had limited experience with them. I asked John Knowles to forfeit his chance to play in the tournament in order to whip these into shape; he agreed, and we went to work.

Initially, we had seventeen entrants for my Saturday tournament. Hank Withaar's brother Eric generously agreed to sign on to even out our playing field, giving us nine games in operation and allowing me to concentrate on questions rather than on playing Steve Sulzby. The first scenario up was *Sword Play* (the only surviving M3-themed scenario), a British vs Japanese situation taking place in Burma, 1945. Because I use scenarios that are nearly publication-quality in their finish (and this one included a two-color layout), there was a strong positive response to the scenario when it was handed out. Unfortunately, *Sword Play* turned out to be slightly unbalanced in favor of the Japanese, and the British, in spite of having three heavily-armed AFVs, tended to take it on the chin (the use of the "Sulzby Scoring System", however, lessens the effect of unbalanced scenarios since each player is rated not against his opponent, but against the other people playing the same side). Additionally, since the Japanese had a slight edge in the scenario, there was no need for them to make use of the optional SSR 4 that provided for the special circumstances of a Japanese leader being able to declare himself Heroic if he then attacked an AFV in an attempt to eliminate its crew with his sword. We had considered throwing out this voluminous Special Rule for the sake of simplicity, but I was determined to keep it in since it provided much of the "color" that would set this apart from any other tank-infantry action. Anyway, no Japanese player saw the need to take the chance, and all nine games played without the invocation of this unusual circumstance. In addition to this disappointment, part way through the playing of the scenario I realized that the Sunken Road on board 40 is actually an Elevated Road--a mistake that had survived many playtests without surfacing. Luckily, eight of the nine games were also playing it as a Sunken Road (which was my intent), and in the one game that used it as an Elevated Road, it had little impact. This aberration is easy enough to fix with a Special Rule, but I felt quite embarrassed that I hadn't caught it sooner. As mentioned previously, the British tended to get the worst of it in this situation, with the Japanese managing to hold most of the victory hexes. Steve Sulzby bet everything on the long shot, putting all his defensive eggs in one basket along the forward edge of deployment--and got the big pay-off, not loosing any victory hexes to the British. On the other side of the coin, there was one spectacular British finish by David Rosner, who captured fully two-thirds of the victory hexes while loosing only one squad-equivalent. Don Burton probably had the farthest to climb, loosing all three of his Lee tanks in the first several turns to Tim Williams' hot 47mm anti-tank gun; Don clawed his way back with his infantry to take a quarter of the victory hexes, allowing him to finish in the middle of the British pack.

The second scenario was *Twilight's Last Gleaming*, and, like *Sword Play*, the response to this scenario was quite enthusiastic--in no doubt partially due to the use of the *Sturmtiger*, which included handing out German Vehicle Note 101 for that vehicle as well as a full color counter of the vehicle for each participant to keep. Another late-war scenario, this one featured a German (ill-prepared) defensive situation against an American "blitzkrieg" in February of 1945. Happily, this scenario was much more evenly balanced than was *Sword Play*, and one side didn't tend to take a bashing. Additionally, there were very few questions with this scenario, the main source of trouble being the complicated German set-up. Due to its unusual nature, the potential power of its MA (a 300mm rocket-mortar), and its enhanced survivability (frontal superstructure armor of "22"), the *Sturmtiger* tended to be the focus of both sides in this encounter. In general, however, the Germans who did the best realized that the *Sturmtiger* was not the key to their defense, but just another of an assorted

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number of "tools" available. Both Jason Sullivan and Ron Mosher threw wrenches in their *Sturmtiger's* transmissions attempting to start them (and Jason's vehicle was in no position to offer support where it was located), and several were lost to American fire. Rob Stai managed to knock out a Sherman with his *Sturmtiger*, and Kurt Manglos got a critical hit with the 300R MA of his *Sturmtiger* using the Infantry Target Type vs a Leader, squad and HS in a stone building, only to dud out the effects DR with a "12". The Americans under Cloyde Angell, Tim Williams and Paul Works managed to take all of the victory point hexes, but generally the results were very close.

For the third round, the field of players was reduced from eighteen to the top six finishers of the first two scenarios. Thus, once the pair-offs were made, Cloyde Angell faced David Rosner, Rob Stai faced Tim Williams, and David Myers faced Ron Mosher. The final scenario played was *Grounding Noriega*, the showcase *Modern ASL* scenario; the situation itself concerned a U.S. Navy SEAL night attack on Paitilla Airport in Panama in December of 1989. Each participant received (in addition to the scenario card) three pages of abbreviated *Modern ASL* rules, a new mapboard with a runway and a small airport (including Hangars and Street Lights), and 8 Special Forces crew counters. Again, there was an uproar in the room when the scenario was handed out, both from those slated to play it as well as from the onlookers. Truly this was new ground being broken in the history of the game system. While two players expressed dismay at having to read three pages of new rules in order to play the scenario, a short walk-through of the rules by John Knowles and myself covered the salient features, and cleared up the questions with Image Intensification Sights. Soon all six finalists were busy, and since the scenario plays swiftly, we finished by 12:30 a.m. David Myers' SEALs managed to slip by Ron Mosher's PDF defensive positions, and Ron suffered the ignominious distinction of immobilizing his own Lear Jet with small arms fire. David was able to finish off the work on the Lear Jet started by Ron, as well as get several aircraft onto the runway in order to create a block, thereby scoring nearly maximum points available to the U.S. On the other hand, Rob Stai's SEALs had more trouble moving up the runway, loosing several crews to fire. The PDF under Tim Williams also was able to keep Rob from completing the block of the runway, and so Tim came away with the best PDF score. Finally, Cloyde Angell's SEALs made a methodical advance against David Rosner's PDF, destroying the Lear Jet and getting enough aircraft on the runway to create a block, while sweeping the resisting PDF units out of the way. A last game turn rally by the PDF, however, resulted in Cloyde loosing a crew to fire, as well as having a SEAL crew captured in the game's final CCPh, putting the game effectively into a draw.

With all the scenarios completed, the results of the tournament were: David Myers captured 1st Place with 30 tournament points, seventeen year old Tim Williams was a close 2nd Place with 29 tournament points, and Cloyde Angell was 3rd Place with 25 tournament points. I feel that everyone that played in the tournament enjoyed the experience; they definitely had the opportunity to play scenarios that were totally new to them, probably in more ways than one. I am sure that everyone was pleased with the new items that they received (both for *Twilight's Last Gleaming* and *Grounding Noriega*), and I am hoping that they will have the chance to use them again. As for myself, I made a few mistakes and I have identified some things that I would do differently. On the whole, however, I don't think that I could have asked for a more positive first tournament experience, and I definitely will be doing it again.

I would like to salute all those who participated in my first tournament, for it was the participants who made it a success, as well as making it possible (several days before the tournament I had a dream that no one showed up for the competition). I would also like to thank Steve Sulzby and Dan Plachta for all of their coaching that allowed me to actually envision carrying out the project. Lastly, I thank all the people who helped playtest my scenarios--some of whose names I do not even know--and especially John Knowles, for without their input this would not have been possible.

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